

# ITTO loses a cornerstone

## **Elena Patricia (‘Patty’) Hanashiro**

**26 April 1964 — 10 February  
2008**

Passed away in Vancouver,  
Canada after a battle with breast  
cancer

PATTY HANASHIRO knew that the Peru of the late 1980s was no place for an ambitious young lady. A free-falling economy together with the poor security situation in the country convinced her to leave her native land for Japan, the country of her ancestors, in mid-1988. Patty had studied English and Japanese in Peru, so was well-placed to meet the burgeoning demand for bilingual office staff in the booming Japanese economy of the late 1980s. After 18 months of working for Tokyo-based Japanese companies, in early 1990 Patty answered a newspaper ad for a secretarial position in an international organization that had recently started operations in Yokohama. Thus started her long and distinguished career with ITTO.

### **Office of the ED**

Patty first worked in the division of Management Services where she impressed with her attention to detail and ability to quickly master any task. Within a year her organizational capabilities had brought her to the attention of Dr Freezailah, ITTO’s first Executive Director, and she moved to manage the office of the ED in 1991. This she did exceptionally well, handling the diverse tasks of the office with poise and competence while earning the respect of her colleagues and the many friends she made among the delegates to various ITTC meetings along the way.

ITTO is a small organization and prospects for staff in the general services ranks to develop their careers through internal promotions are limited. In 1997 Patty decided to leave ITTO to undertake further education in Canada. She studied in Vancouver, excelling in her chosen field and making many new friends. She grew very fond of Vancouver, returning many times up until her final visit. In late 1999, Manoel Sobral was elected as ITTO’s second ED. His first (and what he always insisted was his smartest) move as ED was to invite Patty to return to ITTO as his assistant.

Patty’s second stint of running the office of the ED (which started in January 2000) was even more distinguished than her first. ITTO grew steadily more active during this period, with an increasing amount of authority devolved from Council to the ED under the annual and biannual work programs adopted starting in 2003. Patty not only handled the administrative side of this increasing workload, she was also increasingly called on by Dr Sobral to play an

important role in implementing activities. Patty excelled in everything she was asked to do, and often in things that she wasn’t asked to do. Her ability to think independently and anticipate what needed to be done without being told made her indispensable to Dr Sobral, who often commented that it was Patty that was in charge of the office, not him. Amazingly, in addition to all of her work for ITTO during this time, she found time to undertake correspondence study towards a business degree. In 2005, Patty was rewarded for her service when Dr Sobral promoted her to Programme Officer, making her the first ITTO staff member to make the transition from the general to the professional category. When Dr Sobral was replaced by Emmanuel Ze Meka as ED at the end of 2007, Patty helped to ensure a seamless transition in the operation of the office of the ED.

Patty’s competence  
was matched by an



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effortless elegance. She always dressed impeccably and more than one Council delegate remarked that she provided a welcome interruption when delivering an urgent message to the ED on the podium during a lengthy Council presentation or speech. Partly from her alternative medicine studies, Patty was quite health-conscious and insisted on eating well, with the exception of a weakness for fine chocolates. She was smart, sassy and extremely attractive, with a personality that might have been tailored for work in an international organization like ITTO. Patient, humorous and always willing to listen, it is no surprise that she was a favorite of all staff and the whole ITTO family. Perhaps most important, Patty was completely honest and unafraid to confront anyone she felt was not living up to her high standards, either professionally or personally. Such confrontations could be a bit bruising, but they inevitably left the person on the receiving end a better person.

### **Family ties**

Patty was always close to her family, and her two older sisters ('Liliana' – Yuri and 'Doris' – Midori) together with her parents also immigrated to Japan from Peru. Her father was incapacitated when she was small, so the traditional roles of breadwinner and caregiver were switched as her mother went out to work to support the family. This left a deep impression on Patty, who often told her close friends in the office of her gratitude to her mother for working hard all her life to bring up the three sisters. She expressed her gratitude by planning a month-long trip around the world with her mother in September 2007. At the end of the trip, Patty fulfilled her long-time wish of telling her mother 'thank you', leaving both of them in tears.

Patty always cared deeply about her family's well-being, both physically and financially. In November 2007 she decided to finance her nephew's four year university tuition. At an interview, her nephew told the school that the reason he wanted to study languages was to become like his aunt and to work in the international arena, something that made Patty very proud and a little humbled to be a role model.

When Patty found out her cancer was spreading, her reaction was typical. Before leaving for Vancouver for treatment, she worked late hours making arrangements to leave the office in order while she was away. Even when her condition deteriorated in Vancouver and her doctors told her that she needed someone to take care of her, she kept it to herself. When Manami, her colleague and friend of 17 years at ITTO, went to Vancouver for what turned out to be Patty's final days, she found a newly-bought jacket in her hospital room. "Looking at the jacket made me realize that Patty strongly believed that she would overcome the cancer and was determined to come back to ITTO. I also saw a piece of paper full of her signatures. Probably the spreading of her cancer made it painful to write ... just imagining Patty practicing her own signature brought tears to my eyes."

Patty was truly a cornerstone of ITTO. She was one of the key people who helped to build the organization from a little known entity in 1990 to the well-respected, world-class body it is today. She leaves a big hole in the organization and in the hearts of her many friends. But Patty wouldn't want us to waste time mourning. She would tell us that the best way to honor her is to work hard, as she always did, to take ITTO to new heights. And to reward ourselves to a fine chocolate once in a while as we do so.

### **To Those I Love and Those Who Loved Me**

*When I am gone, release me, let me go  
I have so many things to see and do  
You must not tie yourself to me with tears  
Be happy that we had so many beautiful years  
I gave to you my love, you can only guess  
How much you gave to me in happiness  
I thank you for the love you've each shown me  
But now it's time I travel on, alone  
So grieve a while for me if you must  
Then let your grief be comforted by trust  
It's only for a while that we must part  
To bless the memories within your hearts  
I won't be far away, for life goes on  
So, If you need me, call and I will come  
Though you can't see or touch me  
I'll be near and if you listen with your hearts  
You'll hear all my love around you  
Soft and clear; and then, when you must  
Come this way alone, I'll greet you with a  
Smile and say, 'Welcome Home.'*

### **Message from Patty's family**

The Hanashiro Family expresses their sincere gratitude for the kind words, prayers, cards, e-mails, and flowers given in memory of Patricia Hanashiro.

Your kindness and sympathy are more appreciated than words can ever express. As a daughter, sister and friend, Patty will be greatly missed.